



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

333 WEST OCEAN BOULEVARD • LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA 90802

August 1, 2006

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with the Los Angeles County Bar Association Dispute Resolution Services, Inc., for the use of the Neighborhood Resource Center to provide free and low-cost mediation services for one year with an option to renew for two additional one-year periods based on satisfactory performance and availability of County funding. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

The Department of Community Development, Neighborhood Services Bureau, is responsible for the management of the Neighborhood Resource Center (Center), located at 425 Atlantic Avenue. The Center staff has significant interaction with residents and often assists them in mediating neighborhood disputes without police intervention or litigation.

The County of Los Angeles collects filing fees to support mediation services in lieu of legal action. Currently, 14 agencies receive County funds for mediation services, including the Los Angeles County Bar Association Dispute Resolution Services, Inc., (DRS). On June 15, 2004, the City Council approved an agreement with DRS to provide free services for Long Beach residents at the Center. The agreement was for one year, with a one-year renewal option, which will expire on August 31, 2006.

For the past seven years, DRS has provided services at low or no cost to those who live, work or attend school in Long Beach. Mediation services help resolve neighbor-to-neighbor disputes on such issues as loud parties, barking dogs and other disruptive behaviors. A significant amount of mediation assistance involves landlord-tenant disputes. During the previous program year, DRS initiated 39 cases for mediation, having resolved 38 of those. The continual need for this service is shown by the 101 mediation requests DRS received during that time, although not all cases were able to be mediated for various reasons.

To continue to operate the program in Long Beach, it is necessary for DRS to continue to charge its clients \$50 per case according to their ability to pay. This fee amount remains the same as the previous year's agreement with no increase. Fees will be

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waived for Long Beach residents who meet federal low-income guidelines. The fees will help cover the staff cost to operate the program and are consistent with what DRS charges for this service in other cities.

The attached Program Plan outlines the free and low-cost mediation services provided by DRS. DRS staff will be responsible for scheduling mediation services at the Center and providing trained mediators. The City will assist DRS staff in the marketing and outreach necessary to inform Long Beach residents of this service, provide free office space at the Center, and make bilingual translators available during mediation, as required.

Mediation services are not intended to eliminate existing City programs, such as Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement, Safe Streets Now!, Community Code Enforcement and Community Policing. The program is intended to complement existing City resources to resolve ongoing neighborhood issues and to accept referrals of individuals interested in mediation to solve their neighborhood disputes.

The term of the agreement will be from September 1, 2006, through August 31, 2007 with two one-year renewal options based on satisfactory performance and County funding availability.

This letter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Cristyl Meyers on June 28, 2006 and Budget Management Officer David Wodynski on July 18, 2006.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action is requested on August 1, 2006 to ensure continued mediation services at the Center.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of mediation services will be borne by the Los Angeles County Department of Community and Senior Services through funding of the Dispute Resolution Program grant awarded to Dispute Resolution Services and by individual clients. There will be no impact on the General Fund.

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SUGGESTED ACTION:

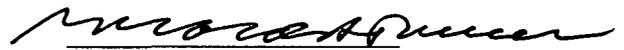
Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



PATRICK H. WEST
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

APPROVED:



GERALD R. MILLER
CITY MANAGER

DJT:mm

Attachment